

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ! **Federal Agency Name(s):** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- ! **Funding Opportunity Title:** John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (Prescott or Prescott Grant Program)
- ! **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- ! **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):** 11.439, Marine Mammal Data Program
- ! **Dates:** Proposals must be postmarked or submitted online by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, September 27, 2006.
- ! **Application Submission:** Online via grants.gov; paper copies to NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, Attn: Michelle Ordonez, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13620, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283; phone 301-713-2322 ext 177.
- ! **Funding Opportunity Description:** The Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program of the National Marine Fisheries Service is charged under the Marine Mammal Protection Act with facilitating the collection and dissemination of reference data on stranded marine mammals and health trends of marine mammal populations in the wild. Through cooperation with NMFS Regional Coordinators, local organizations and state and local government officials respond to and collect valuable data from stranded marine mammals as participants in the national Marine Mammal Stranding Network. The John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program is conducted by NOAA to provide Federal assistance to eligible members of the Stranding Network to: A) Support basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals, B) fund scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals, and C) support facility operations directly related to the recovery or treatment of stranded marine mammals and collection of data from living or dead stranded marine mammals.

## **FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT**

### **I. Funding Opportunity Description**

#### **A. Program Objective**

The Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Act of 2000 amended the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to establish the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (16 U.S.C. 1421f-1) (hereafter referred to as the Prescott Grant Program). This document describes how to submit proposals for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2007 under the Prescott Grant Program and how we will determine which proposals will be funded.

The Prescott Grant Program is conducted by the Secretary of Commerce to provide federal assistance to eligible stranding network participants (see section I.E. of this document) for (A) basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals<sup>1</sup>, (B) scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals, and (C) facility operations directly related to the recovery, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals and investigation of scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals. The Prescott Grant Program is administered through the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP) of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

In 1992, the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Act amended the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1421) and formalized the MMHSRP. The MMHSRP was established to achieve 3 broad goals: (1) to facilitate the collection and dissemination of reference data on marine mammals and health trends of marine mammal populations in the wild; (2) to correlate the health of marine mammals and marine mammal populations in the wild with available data on physical, chemical, and biological environmental parameters; and (3) to coordinate effective responses to unusual mortality events. To achieve these goals, the MMHSRP (through close coordination with regional stranding networks) has the following objectives: improve the rescue, care and treatment of stranded marine mammals; reduce public health risks during response to and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals; collect life history and biomedical data from live and dead stranded marine mammals; develop baseline reference data on health of wild populations and “normal” stranding rates and causes; improve the rapid detection of unusual morbidity and mortality events; collect archival samples for future retrospective studies on causes of mortality or illness and for placement in the National Marine Mammal Tissue (and Serum) Bank and other archival facilities including genetics and genomics; and develop comprehensive and consistent

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this document, a stranded marine mammal is a marine mammal in the wild that is (1) dead and on a beach, shore, or in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States or (2) is live and on a beach or shore of the United States and unable to return to the water, is in apparent need of medical attention, or is in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States but is unable to return to its natural habitat under its own power or without assistance.

guidance for the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals, collection of specimens, quality assurance, and analysis of tissue samples.

NMFS has reserved a portion of previous year funds to make emergency assistance available for catastrophic stranding events throughout the FY 2007 funding year on an as-needed basis. These emergency events should fall under one of the three program categories, and one or more national or regional funding priority. This emergency assistance is available to eligible organizations or individuals even though they may already be receiving funds from the Prescott Program's annual competitive award cycle for another project. Responders to such stranding events should contact the NMFS Regional Office that oversees the area of action or the Program Office (Office of Protected Resources, Silver Spring, MD) for further information. Until further guidance is published, those seeking emergency assistance funding should prepare for submission to the Regional Office and the Office of Protected Resources all forms and documentation outlined in Section III, Proposal Instructions and Requirements, of this document.

## B. Program Priorities

As a result of comments received from those who submitted proposals in 2006 and those who took part in the 2006 technical and merit reviews of those proposals, changes to the solicitation and review processes are being instituted in this competition. Therefore, we encourage applicants who submitted a proposal in 2006 or previous competitions to read this entire document before preparing a proposal for 2007.

For this solicitation, all applications must fall within one of the 3 following categories:

- A) Support basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals,
- B) Fund scientific research projects designed to test hypotheses and answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals, and
- C) Support facility operations directly related to the recovery or treatment of stranded marine mammals and collection of data from living or dead stranded marine mammals and investigation of scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals.

The applicant must select one category in which to place their proposal. Since we recognize that some projects could be designed to meet more than one category, you should determine which category best fits the goals of your proposed project. Proposals submitted in Category B should clearly state the hypothesis to be tested, outline analytical and statistical techniques chosen and address sample size and predicted power.

For each of the proposal Categories the MMHSRP has identified multiple national-level funding priorities. These Program priorities pertain only to species that the MMPA provides are under the authority of the Department of Commerce (cetaceans and pinnipeds, except walrus). No FY2007 Prescott funds will go towards basic scientific research on non-stranded marine mammals (i.e., wild population studies). In addition, no projects involving construction of new facilities for the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals will be considered;

however, construction projects in established facilities (i.e., those that involve build-outs, alterations, upgrades and renovations) would be appropriate for Category C projects. Proposals not falling under one of the 3 categories will be returned to the applicant after initial review, and unless revised and resubmitted before the close of the submission period, will not be considered further in this funding cycle.

In addition to the 3 proposal categories and their related National funding priorities, Regional funding priorities have been identified under each category. Each NMFS Region has separately identified these funding priorities that will improve the capabilities of their regional stranding network in achieving the goals of the Prescott Program in the 2007 competitive cycles in addition to the national priorities. These priorities may be different from previous competitions. The overarching Program goals and regional funding priorities are designed to adapt to changing needs in the marine mammal stranding network and will be re-evaluated by MMHSRP staff and NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinators annually prior to each competition.

The priorities are not listed in any particular order and each is of equal importance, whether national and regional. Note that the purpose of the priority list is to guide applicants in application development by identifying those applications that will best compete during this grant cycle for these limited funds, and to provide technical reviewers with guidance for their evaluations. Details of the 3 categories and the national and regional funding priorities are as follows:

Category A - Support basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals

1. National Funding Priorities

1. Enhance network operations to respond to, rescue, transport, treat, and humanely euthanize, when necessary, live stranded marine mammals that are sick or injured.
2. Enhance rehabilitation practices to protect wild animals in rehabilitation from exposure to novel pathogens and prevent introduction of new or altered diseases into the wild.
3. Enhance the ability to conduct effective post-release monitoring of rehabilitated and released marine mammals (e.g. purchase tags, assist with tagging, analyze tag data, boat time for tracking, airplane time, train others how to track, etc.)
4. Needed equipment or supply enhancements and/or upgrades to rehabilitation facility capabilities to meet the Interim Rehabilitation Facility Standards (available on the web at: [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/health/rehab\\_facilities.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/health/rehab_facilities.pdf)) and Interim Standards for the Release of Rehabilitated Marine Mammals (available on the web at: [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/health/release\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/health/release_guidelines.pdf))
5. Enhance the quality, quantity, reporting, and sharing of level B and C data collected from stranded marine mammals, including complete diagnostic screening on stranded animals, equipment necessary to collect samples and perform analyses and detection and reporting of emerging diseases.
6. Enhance attendance and participation by professional staff and facility volunteers in training, particularly in the areas of incident command structure, public health, marine

mammal disease and treatment issues.

7. Train responders to improve consistency and quality of assessments, documentation and data management for live and dead stranded marine mammals.
8. Enhance outreach and education by developing materials and messages for both the network and the general public regarding stranding response and rehabilitation, particularly those that convey the more challenging aspects and limitations (e.g. humane euthanasia, natural selection, resource limitations, etc.).
9. Improve capacity for response to mass stranding events including live animal triage, treatment, short and long term care and thorough necropsy and sample analysis of dead or euthanized animals.
10. Enhance the capability to respond to and rehabilitate live and dead stranded marine mammals that are at risk or impacted by oil or other hazardous material spills, including development (or assisting with the development) of an area and/or regional contingency plan for Oil Spill response and Oil Spill sampling protocols.

2. Regional Funding Priorities - In addition to the above national priorities, each region has identified the following priorities of particular interest:

a. Northeast Region

1. Enhance large whale stranding response to include equipment and resources for at-sea investigation, recovery of floating carcasses, necropsy, sampling, skeletal salvage, and disposal.
2. Enhance Incident Command System protocols and training for marine mammal stranding events.
3. Enhance sampling training and development of standardized sampling kits for marine mammal stranding events.
4. Organizational enhancement for marine mammal stranding data management and data quality assurance protocols.

b. Northwest Region

1. Improve capability for handling, stabilization, or treatment of live stranded odontocetes.
2. Development of protocols for the identification, processing, and disposal of dead marine mammals that carry contaminant burdens exceeding allowable limits for disposal in the environment.
3. Enhance response and Level A data collection capability in areas with low or intermittent coverage.
4. Enhance capabilities to perform thorough necropsies and diagnostics on unusual stranded marine mammal species and to perform thorough necropsies on dead specimens in good condition rapidly prior to degradation.
5. Enhance data collection from stranded killer whales to investigate overall health parameters.

c. Southeast Region

1. Address gaps in stranding response coverage and Level A data collection and capability (live and/or dead strandings) in the following geographic areas where there is little or no coverage: Florida (Wakulla County through Pasco County, Lee and Collier County), Louisiana (entire coastline), and the Caribbean. In addition, enhance existing coverage in the following Florida Counties: Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf, and Franklin.
2. Enhance capability to collect Level A Human Interaction data through training and implementation.
3. Enhance capabilities to perform thorough necropsies and diagnostics on stranded marine mammals, and to perform thorough necropsies on dead specimens in good condition rapidly prior to degradation- particularly during mass stranding events, large whale stranding events, and UMEs. This includes staging equipment caches for small and large cetaceans throughout the SER.
4. Develop a necropsy “how-to” field guide for small cetaceans specific to the Southeast Region.

d. Southwest Region

1. Conducting complete necropsies on all fresh dead stranded large whales.
2. Determining the extent of California sea lion mortalities due to shootings by conducting complete necropsies on all fresh dead stranded California sea lions.

e. Pacific Islands Region

1. Operational and staffing needs for increasing quality of care, including veterinary care, data collection, and necropsies during stranding events in the Main Hawaiian Islands. Organization of outreach and training in the Main Hawaiian Islands for response, readiness, and treatment of stranded marine mammals.
2. Operational and staffing needs for increasing quality of care, including veterinary care, data collection, and necropsies during stranding events in the other US Pacific Islands. Organization of outreach and training in the U.S. Pacific Islands (e.g., Guam, American Samoa, and Northern Mariana Islands) for response, readiness, and treatment of stranded marine mammals.

f. Alaska Region

1. Respond to live fur seal entanglements on the Pribilof Islands
2. Enhance response, sampling, and necropsy capacity in remote and rural regions.
3. Enhance capacity to respond to and mitigate live stranded marine mammal entanglements in fishing gear.
4. Develop communication tools and collaborative activities within the Alaska Regional Stranding Network to support response and rehabilitation.

Category B - Fund scientific research objectives designed to test hypotheses and answer

questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals

1. National Funding Priorities

1. Collect **and analyze** specimens or data (using quality control procedures) from stranded marine mammals to retrospectively or prospectively assess health trends in wild populations of cetaceans and pinnipeds, with emphasis on diseases that have potential for epizootics (e.g., morbillivirus), are endemic and may have a significant impact on survival/reproduction (e.g., herpes and other viruses), or have zoonotic potential.
2. Collect **and analyze** samples for baseline information on population demographics, life history, movement and distribution, and health, including disease, contaminants, pathogens, nutrition, biotoxins (including multiple biotoxins) and microbial flora (including antibiotic resistance).
3. Evaluate correlations between environmental parameters (physical, biological, and chemical) and records of marine mammal strandings, morbidity, and epizootics, particularly cetacean mass strandings.
4. Analyze current and/or previously-collected tracking and sighting data to assess post-release success of rehabilitated animals (foraging, breeding records, behavior, etc.). Develop criteria for post-release monitoring (e.g. determining how to best monitor coastal vs. offshore species, determining tagging priorities based on limited number of tags etc.). Collaborative projects with multiple organizations are encouraged.
5. Assess animal diet to determine potential exposure to biotoxins, including collection and analysis of stomach content samples for biotoxin levels during and between known harmful algal blooms.

2. Regional Funding Priorities – In addition to the above national priorities, each region has identified the following priorities of particular interest:

a. Northeast Region

1. Enhance assessment of acoustic injuries in stranded marine mammals both in the field and laboratory including development of protocol for detection of these injuries.
2. Enhance assessment of marine mammal ship strike injuries to determine vessel parameters (e.g. estimated vessel type, size, speed and direction of travel).
3. Enhance options for humane euthanasia of marine mammals through investigation of alternative methods to assess potential reductions to environmental impacts.
4. Enhance ability to assess the long-term effects and outcomes of serious injuries to free-swimming large whales by examining records of the injury and subsequent sighting and health evaluations for known individuals.
5. Enhance ability to assess the short and long-term effects and outcomes of stranding response, human interaction and rehabilitation on marine mammals in the NER.
6. Enhance our understanding of marine mammals as a reservoir of infectious diseases by collecting and analyzing disease data from stranded marine mammals.

7. Develop protocols for peer review of necropsies and associated clinical analyses.
8. Enhancement for data analysis and (collaborative) publications for strandings in the NER.

b. Northwest Region

1. Data collection and analysis of post-release survival and health status of marine mammals including releases from rehabilitation and/or beach releases.
2. Data collection and analysis from stranded killer whales and/or harbor porpoise to clarify taxonomic and stock identification in the wild populations of these two species.
3. Develop capability within the Region to conduct examinations of fresh dead (condition 2) stranded marine mammals using computerized tomography(CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and analyze data for evidence of injury from human interaction or to assist in determining the cause of death.
4. Collect and analyze specialized data from stranded killer whales to investigate overall health parameters, prey types, diseases, immune and reproductive functions.
5. Collect and analyze data from stranded marine mammals to use in comparative and retrospective studies of contaminant exposures and burdens in marine mammals.
6. Collect and analyze data from stranded marine mammals to investigate diseases affecting marine mammals.

c. Southeast Region

1. Enhance understanding of causes or contributing factors to marine mammal mortality events (e.g. mass mortality events, mass strandings, and unusual mortality events) as well as continued investigation for repeat mortality events.
2. Analyze life history tissues, particularly from mass stranding events or unusual mortality events.
3. Investigate anthropogenic impacts to marine mammals.
4. Enhance cooperative research that investigates causes for, and increases understanding of, pygmy sperm whale (*Kogia breviceps*) stranding events.

d. Southwest Region

1. Analysis of DNA samples to determine if northern fur seals that strand (both live and dead) in California belong to the Pribilof Islands stock or the San Miguel Island stock.
2. Devise a method for determining the maximum level of domoic acid toxicity at which an affected California sea lion should be deemed non-releasable.

e. Pacific Islands Region

1. Conduct thorough necropsies and collect and analyze biological samples that will enhance the ability to detect purposeful and incidental human-induced injuries and mortalities (e.g. entanglements, hookings and gear interaction, and boat strikes).

f. Alaska Region

1. Collect and analyze tissue samples appropriate for genetic analysis from stranded harbor seals and Steller sea lions.



2. Collect and analyze specimens and data from stranded marine mammals to assess the overall health trends in wild marine mammal populations.
3. Enhance detection and assessment of human-caused marine mammal injury and mortality from ship strikes, entanglements in fishing gear, and acoustic impacts.

Category C - Facility operations directly related to categories A or B above (i.e., physical plant renovations, maintenance, facility modifications/upgrades or construction).

#### 1. National Funding Priorities

1. Enhance physical plant capabilities to increase the quality of care of live stranded marine mammals or enhance the safety and quality of data or sample collection from living or dead stranded marine mammals.
2. Enhance physical plant capabilities through renovations or other modifications to better ensure human safety.
3. Enhancements or upgrades to necropsy facilities.
4. Facility renovations or modifications needed to upgrade existing rehabilitation facilities to meet Interim Rehabilitation Facility Standards (e.g. quarantine, safety, water quality parameters, etc.; Standards are available on the web at: [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/health/rehab\\_facilities.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/health/rehab_facilities.pdf)).

2. Regional Funding Priorities - In addition to the above national priorities, each region has identified the following priorities of particular interest:

##### a. Northeast Region

1. Upgrade facility information management systems and capabilities to improve or allow access to the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program National databases.
2. Facility operation needs and equipment to improve in-house sample tracking, archiving, and shipping.

##### b. Northwest Region

1. Upgrade facilities for handling, stabilizing or treating stranded odontocetes.
2. Enhance capability to hold stranded marine mammals, taken for treatment or rehabilitation, for extended periods of time (i.e., > 6 months) when release is anticipated but not imminent.

##### c. Southeast Region

1. Enhance or upgrade permanent and/or mobile necropsy facilities.
2. Facility operation needs and equipment to improve in-house sample tracking, archiving, and shipping.

d. Southwest Region – The Southwest Region has no additional priorities.

e. Pacific Islands Region

1. Facility operation needs to improve access to veterinary care of stranded marine mammals, including facility improvements, on-site (lab or field) equipment, instruments for more rapid assessment of medical condition, and instruments for monitoring of treatment response

f. Alaska Region

1. Facility operation needs to improve in-house sample tracking and archiving for participation in the National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank and the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding national database.

C. Program Authority 16 USC 1421 f-1

## **II. Award Information**

### **A. Funding Availability**

This solicitation announces that a maximum of \$4M may be available for distribution under the FY 2007 annual competitive Prescott Program. Applicants are hereby given notice that these funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and therefore exact dollar amounts cannot be given. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The maximum Federal award for each grant cannot exceed \$100,000, as stated in the legislative language (16 U.S.C. 1421f-1).

In addition to the annual competitive process, \$1.1 M has been set aside from previous years' funds to provide for emergency assistance awards to eligible stranding network participants through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). These emergency funds will be available until expended and may be supplemented with FY 2007 funds as needed.

There is no limit on the number of proposals that can be submitted by the same stranding network participant during the 2007 competitive grant cycle. However, since there are insufficient funds to award financial assistance to every member of the network, organizations will receive no more than two awards per year as part of the competitive program. The two awards must be for projects that are clearly separate in their objectives, goals, and budget requests and must be successful in the competitive review process. In addition, eligible researchers applying as Principal Investigators, but not independently authorized under the MMPA Section 112(c), the MMPA Section 109(h) (50 CFR 216.22), or the National Contingency Plan for Response to Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events, can receive no more than one award per year as part of the competitive cycle.

Authorized stranding network participants and researchers may be identified as Co-Investigators or collaborators on as many proposals as needed as long as no more than 100 percent of their time is funded through the Prescott Program. In addition, Department of Commerce and Department of Interior employees may act as collaborators if they are responsible for performing analyses on data or samples collected under a Prescott award. See section I.F. for Eligibility requirements.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA/NMFS has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years beyond the award period.

If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award. Notwithstanding any verbal or written assurance that applicants have received, pre-award costs are not allowed under the award unless the Grants Officer approves them in accordance with 15 CFR 14.28.

#### B. Project/Award Period

This solicitation announces that a maximum of \$4M may be available for distribution under the FY 2007 competitive program. Prescott awards may have a maximum project period of 3 years, but the total Federal award share cannot exceed \$100,000 regardless of the length of the project period. We will not accept proposals requesting incrementally funded projects exceeding \$100,000.

If an applicant wishes to continue work on a project funded through this program beyond the approved award period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of this period, the applicant can notify the assigned Federal Program Officer 30 or more days prior to the end of the period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension. If, however, the money is expended and funds are needed to continue the project, the applicant should submit another proposal during the next competitive award cycle (FY 2007) or seek an alternate source of funding.

If a proposal is selected for funding, we have no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award.

#### C. Type of funding instrument

Under this solicitation, NOAA will fund Prescott grants as a maximum of a \$100,000 award, with a maximum project period of 3 years.

#### D. Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals. In order to determine whether such permits and approvals have been obtained or requested, the applicant must include in the proposal package either: 1) an application cover letter from the Prescott applicant to the appropriate authorizing entity requesting permits (e.g., MMPA scientific research/enhancement permit, etc.) or approvals, or 2) a copy of the final permit or approval.

If the activities proposed fall under the jurisdiction of a facility's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), the applicant must have requested or obtained approval from

the IACUC prior to applying for funding under this program (as required by the regulations under the Animal Welfare Act, 9 CFR 2.30-2.31). If the proposed data collection involves intrusive research (50 CFR 216.27(c)(6)) or if animals must be held after rehabilitation has been completed (prevented from release), the applicant must also obtain a MMPA/ESA scientific research and enhancement permit before the proposal will be considered for funding. Intrusive research is defined under 50 CFR 216.3 as a procedure that involves: a break in or cutting of the skin or equivalent, insertion of an instrument or material into an orifice, introduction of a substance or object into the animals' immediate environment that is likely either to be ingested or to contact and directly affect animal tissues (i.e., chemical substances), or a stimulus directed at animals that poses a risk to the health or welfare of the animal or has the potential to impact normal function or behavior (e.g., audio broadcasts directed at animals that potentially affects behavior, brainstem auditory evoked responses, etc.).

If proposed activities will take place within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, State Parks, and other federally or state-designated protected areas, it is the applicant's responsibility to request and obtain from the appropriate government agencies any necessary federal, state or local permits or letters of agreement for conducting the proposed activities.

Activities directly related to the individual animal's health assessment, standard diagnostics, treatment, approved post-release monitoring, or release are separately authorized by NMFS under the authorizations for stranding network participants and therefore these activities do not require an additional permit.

For further information on permit requirements and applications procedures for federal natural resource permits, contact the NMFS Office of Protected Resources (see Section VII, Agency Contact(s)) or see the following website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/>. You may also use the pre-application guide located at: <http://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov/> to help determine if your work will require additional permits or approvals.

For proposals involving construction projects (i.e., facility upgrades), it is the applicant's responsibility to request or obtain all building, water quality, air quality, wetland or other necessary permits and include documentation of such requests or approvals in the proposal package. Documentation must, to the extent possible, include environmental information that has been or will be submitted to the appropriate Federal, state, and local government offices (see Section IV, Application and Submission Information, for required information for each proposal category). These documents will help the Prescott Program in determining the potential for environmentally significant activities and ensure NMFS compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

All applications will be reviewed using the Grants NEPA Checklist to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or whether an Environmental Assessment is necessary in conformance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. For those applications needing an Environmental Assessment, affected applicants will be informed after the peer review stage and will be requested to assist in the preparation of a draft of the assessment by providing all necessary information to complete the assessment (prior to award).

Receipt of required MMPA/ESA scientific research and enhancement permits will be required prior to award of funds if the proposal is selected for funding and the applicant has not yet obtained the permit. Failure to obtain other Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessments or documentation) will also delay the award of funds.

### **III. Eligibility Information**

#### **A. Eligible Applicants**

There are 5 categories of eligible stranding network participants that may apply for funds under this Program: 1) Letter of Agreement (LOA) holders; 2) LOA designee organizations; 3) holders of researcher authorization letters; 4) official Northwest Region participants; and, 5) state, local, eligible federal government or tribal employees or personnel.

All applicants must currently be:

1. Active as an authorized participant or researcher in the marine mammal stranding network, and have 3 or more years of history with the network;
2. In good standing<sup>2</sup> and;
3. Not a current full or part-time employee or contractor of the Department of Commerce (DOC) or Department of the Interior (DOI).

Exceptions to the requirement of 3 or more years of history with the network may be made in those geographic areas where there are no pre-existing organizations for local stranding response and/or rehabilitation, but all applicants must demonstrate a level of experience appropriate for the successful completion of the proposed activities.

In addition to these general criteria, organizations and individuals must meet the following eligibility criteria specific to their category of participation:

#### **1. LOA Holder Participant**

LOA participants must be holding a current (active) LOA for stranding response (either live or

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<sup>2</sup> To be “in good standing”, you must meet all of the following criteria:

1. If a the applicant is a designated Principal Investigator of a Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) or Endangered Species Act (ESA) scientific research or enhancement permit holder, the applicant must have fulfilled all permit requirements, including but not limited to submission of all reports, and must have no pending or outstanding enforcement actions under the MMPA or ESA.
2. Have complied with the terms and responsibilities of the appropriate LOA, MMPA section 109(h) authorization, or National Contingency Plan (whichever applies). This includes the following reporting requirements: a) timely reporting of strandings to NMFS, and b) timely submission of complete reports on basic or Level A data to the Regional Coordinator (includes investigator’s name, species, stranding location, number of animals, date and time of stranding and recovery, length and condition, and sex; marine mammal parts retention or transfer; annual reports), and (3) collecting information or samples as necessary and as requested. This also includes the following coordination/cooperation requirements: a) cooperation with state, local, and Federal officials, b) cooperation with state and local officials in the disposition of stranded marine mammals, and c) cooperation with other stranding network participants.
3. Have cooperated in a timely manner with NMFS in collecting and submitting Level B (supplementary information regarding sample collection related to life history and to the stranding event) and Level C (necropsy results) data and samples, when requested.
4. Have no current enforcement investigation for the take of marine mammals contrary to the MMPA/ESA regulations.
5. Have no record of pending NMFS notice of violation(s) regarding the policies governing the goals and operations of the Stranding Network.

dead animal response) or rehabilitation from a NMFS Regional Administrator or the Assistant Administrator.

## 2. LOA Designee Participant;

LOA Designee participants must be holding a current (active) letter of designation from a NMFS LOA holder, and designees cannot request authorization for activities beyond the scope of what is authorized by the LOA to the letterholder.

## 3. Researcher Participant

Researcher participants must be holding a current (active) authorizing letter for the proposed award period from the NMFS Regional Administrator or the Assistant Administrator to salvage stranded marine mammal specimens and parts or samples therefrom for the purpose of utilization in scientific research (50 CFR 216.22). Persons authorized to salvage dead marine mammal specimens under this section must register the salvage with the appropriate NMFS Regional Office within 30 days after the taking occurs.

Researcher participants must also have designated co-Investigator(s) that are active NMFS-authorized stranding network participants in good standing, and provide documentation to this effect.

## 4. Northwest Region Participants

If not LOA holders, Northwest Region participants must be named in the National Contingency Plan for Response to Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events (Wilkinson, 1996).

## 5. State, Local, Federal Government Employees or Tribal Participants

State and local government officials or employees participating pursuant to MMPA section 109(h)(16 U.S.C. 1379(h)) for marine mammal species not listed under the Endangered Species Act fulfilling reporting obligations outlined in 50 CFR 216.22 (i.e., submission of written report to NMFS every six months containing description of animal(s) involved, circumstances of taking, method of taking, name and position of official or employee involved, and disposition of animal(s)). Government officials must be involved in areas of geographic need (i.e., municipality or larger region with no existing responder)

Applicants must submit the required documentation in their proposal (see Section IV, Application and Submission Information) as evidence that they are an LOA holder participant, designee participant, researcher participant, Northwest Region participant, or a state, local, Federal government employee, or tribal participant at the time of the submission and during the award period. All eligibility criteria specified for the participant's category must be met in order for a proposal to be considered for funding.

We support cultural and gender diversity in our programs and encourage eligible women and minority individuals and groups to submit proposals. Furthermore, we recognize the interest of the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior in defining appropriate marine management policies and programs that meet the needs of the U.S. insular areas, so we also encourage proposals from eligible individuals, government entities, universities, colleges, and businesses in U.S. insular

areas as defined by the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) (section 3(14), 16 U.S.C. 1362). This includes the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U. S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

We are strongly committed to broadening the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), which include Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas in our programs. The DOC/NOAA/NMFS vision, mission, and goals are to achieve full participation by MSIs, to advance the development of human potential, strengthen the Nation's capacity to provide high-quality education, and increase opportunities for MSIs to participate in and benefit from Federal financial assistance programs. Therefore, Prescott Grant Program encourages all eligible applicants to include meaningful participation of MSIs whenever practicable.

Applicants are not eligible to submit a proposal under this program if they are an employee of the DOC or DOI. NOAA/NMFS employees (whether full-time, part-time, or intermittent) are not allowed to help in the preparation of proposals, except for providing information on data or sample analyses as an identified collaborator/Co-Investigator in the proposal. MMHSRP staff (at the regional and national level) are available to provide information regarding statistics on strandings, MMHSRP programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing marine mammal programs, regional funding priorities for the current and previous Prescott solicitations, and, along with other Federal Program Officers, can provide guidance on application procedures and proper completion of required forms. Since this is a competitive program, NMFS and NOAA employees cannot provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals, or write letters of support for any proposal. However, for activities that involve collaboration with current NOAA programs that include, but are not limited to, the National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank (NMMTB) or laboratories conducting analysis of tissues for contaminants, employees of NOAA or the National Institute of Standards and Technology can write a letter verifying that they are collaborating with the project, or that the organization or individual applying is trained to participate in the NMMTB or is currently participating in the National Marine Analytical Quality Assurance Program. Federal employee travel costs or salaries are not allowable costs under this program.

Unsatisfactory performance under prior or current Federal awards, including delinquency in submitting progress reports, can result in proposals not being considered for funding under the 2007 Prescott Grant Program.

#### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

All proposals submitted must provide a minimum non-Federal cost share of 25 percent of the total budget (i.e.,  $.25 \times \text{total project costs} = \text{total non-Federal share}$ ). Therefore, the total Federal share will be 75 percent or less of the total budget. For a proposed total Federal share of \$100,000, the minimum non-Federal share is \$33,334 (total budget of \$133,334;  $.25 \times \$133,334 = \$33,334$ ). For a proposed total Federal share of \$80,000, the minimum non-Federal share is \$26,667 (total budget of \$106,667;  $.25 \times \$106,667 = \$26,667$ ). Cost share must be an integer, so please round up. The applicant can include a non-Federal cost share for more than 25 percent of

the total budget, but this obligation will be binding. **In order to reduce calculation error in determining the correct cost share amounts, we urge all applicants to use the cost share calculator on the Prescott Program web page (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/proposals/costshare.htm>).**

Legislation under which the Prescott Program operates requires this cost sharing, or non-Federal match, in order to leverage the limited funds available for this program and to encourage partnerships among government, private organizations, non-profit organizations, the stranding network, and academia to address the needs of marine mammal health and stranding response. If a proposal does not comply with these cost share requirements, it will not be returned and considered in this annual funding cycle.

The Federal Program Officer will determine the appropriateness of all non-Federal cost sharing proposals, including the valuation of in-kind contributions, according to the regulations codified at 15 CFR 14.23 and 24.24. An in-kind contribution is a non-cash contribution, donated or loaned, by a third party to the applicant. In general, the value of in-kind services or property used to fulfill a non-Federal cost share will be the fair market value of the services or property. Thus, the value is determined by the cost of obtaining such services or property if they had not been donated, or of obtaining such services or property for the period of the loan. The applicant must document the in-kind services or property used to fulfill the non-Federal cost share. If we decide to fund a proposal, we will require strict accounting of the in-kind contributions within the total non-Federal cost share included in the award document. The Grants Officer (i.e., the Department of Commerce official responsible for all business management and administrative aspects of a grant and with delegated authority to award, amend, administer, close out, suspend, and/or terminate awards) is the final approving authority for the award, including the budget and any cost-sharing proposals.

#### **IV. Application and Submission Information**

##### **A. Address to Request Application Package**

This solicitation, complete proposal packages (including required federal forms) with instructions, a cost share calculator and address for application submission are available on the NMFS Prescott Program web page at:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/>

Required forms differ based on the type of proposal. Non-construction proposals require the SF-424A and SF-424B. Construction proposals (those with 50% or more of their requested federal amount going to construction activities) require the federal forms for construction (i.e., SF-424D and SF-424C).

The required forms are as follows:

Forms required of all proposals:

Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424

Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters: Drug

Free Workplace Environment: CD-511



For projects not involving construction (Category A and B):

Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs - SF-424A

Assurances - Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B

For projects with 50 percent or more of their requested federal amount going to construction activities such as build-outs, alterations, upgrades, and renovations to existing facilities

(Category C):

Budget Information - Construction Programs: SF-424C

Assurances - Construction Programs: SF-424D

Depending on the applicant, the following forms may also be required:

Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)

Name Check: CD-346 (Required for the following applicants- Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations, Joint Venture, Non-profit Organizations) **NOTE:** The CD-346 Name Check form is not available through grants.gov. It may be obtained from this website: <http://www.osec.doc.gov/forms/pdf/cd346fll.pdf>

If required, please complete it, scan it and attach it to your proposal.

If forms cannot be downloaded contact Angela Payne or Karen Salvini, NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring MD 20912, 301 713-2322, or by email: [angela.payne@noaa.gov](mailto:angela.payne@noaa.gov).

## B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements by the deadline of 11:59 PM, Wednesday, September 27, 2006, for proposal submission. The instructions in this document are designed to help applicants in preparing and submitting a application for Federal funding under the Prescott Grant Program. Assistance in filling out required forms and avoiding common problems can be found on the NOAA Grants web site at:

<http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/>. The Prescott Grant Program web site at:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/> has supplemental instructions for completing all federal forms and the budget narrative, and questions and answers related to applying for funds under the Prescott Grant Program.

Proposals should be submitted online through the Grants.gov website. If you encounter a problem and cannot submit your proposal electronically, one signed original and two signed paper copies of the complete proposal package may be submitted. The original proposal and copies should not be bound in any manner and must be printed on one side only. Proposals must be in **10-point font** and **double-spaced** with 1 inch margins. In addition, if you submit a paper application, applicants should submit an electronic copy, on diskette or CD, of the narrative project description. The required unbound original and two copies, and the optional electronic copy must be sent to the address listed in section IV.E. of this document and postmarked by the submission deadline in order to be considered in the 2007 competition.

Applicants must choose and identify one category and the specific research priority or priorities within that category to which the proposal is responding. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, it should list first on the application the priority that most closely reflects the objective of the proposals. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the Prescott Grant Program or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, **the Project Description may not exceed 10 pages for each proposal.** Appendices may be included but must not exceed a total of 15 pages in length. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limitation. Additional informational material will be disregarded. Proposals must include the following information:

1. Cover Sheet: Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standard Forms 424 and 424B (4-92) or 424D must be the cover sheets for each proposal. To complete item 10 of Standard Form 424, the “Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance” number is 11.439, and the title is “Marine Mammal Data Program.” For item 13 of Standard Form 424, a start date no earlier than 1 June 2007 should be selected.

2. Total project costs and budget narrative: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and include contributions and donations. Each proposal must include clear and concise budget information on the required federal forms and in narrative detail.

Proposals requesting a federal amount that does not include construction activities or in which construction activities are less than 50 percent of the total federal amount must use OMB standard form 424A, “Budget Information - Non Construction Programs” and associated form instructions. Proposals that include a requested federal amount for construction activities that is equal to or greater than 50 percent of the total federal amount requested must use OMB standard form 424C “Budget Information - Construction Programs” and associated form instructions.

All instructions should be read before completing the appropriate form. Both Federal and non-Federal columns on these forms must be filled in completely and separately and the amounts per category and total amounts must correspond with the budget narrative and justification.

On a separate sheet, describe and justify in narrative detail or on a spreadsheet the itemized costs per category between Federal and non-Federal shares and the corresponding direct and indirect cost totals. For the non-Federal share, the itemized costs should be separated into cash and in-kind contributions. If in-kind contributions are included, describe briefly the basis for estimating the value of these contributions.

If the applicant currently has a negotiated indirect cost rate with the Federal government, indirect costs can be included in the budget. Indirect costs are overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. Indirect costs can be included in both the Federal and non-Federal cost shares as long as the method of calculation is clear and certain rules are followed. However, the Federal share of the indirect costs may not exceed 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs for this Program. Applicants with indirect costs above 25 percent may use the amount above the 25 percent level as match. If

indirect costs are included, the package should include a copy of the current, approved, negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal government (see Section IV.D.2). This copy will not be included in the page limit requirements.

Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

We will not consider fees, fund-raising activities, travel for federal employees, salaries for federal employees, or profits as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs you incur, including the value of in-kind contributions, in accomplishing project activities during the project period. A project begins on the effective date of an award agreement between you and the Grants Officer and ends on the date specified in the award. Accordingly, we cannot reimburse applicants for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or preparing the application, or in any discussions or negotiations with us prior to the award. We will not accept such expenditures as part of your cost share.

3. Title Page (1 page limit): A Title Page must be included for each project. The Title Page must list the project title, project duration (with a start date no earlier than 1 June 2007), applicant name, name of Principal Investigator or Contact, address and phone number of the Principal Investigator or Contact, the Prescott Grant Program Category under which the project fits (see Section I.B. of this document), the project's objective(s), and a statement of the Federal, non-Federal and total costs of the project.

4. Project summary (1-page limit): In 6 sentences or less, briefly summarize: project goals and objectives as they relate to the Prescott Grant Program Categories (i.e., Category A, Category B, or Category C), Program goals and/or Regional funding priorities; proposed activities; geographic area where activities would occur; and expected outcomes and benefits from the activities (e.g., increased number of responses to live stranded cetaceans, greater and higher quality data collected from pinniped strandings, renovation and upgrade of a marine mammal rehabilitation facility, etc.) of the project. This summary may be posted on our website if the project is funded.

5. Project description (10-page limit): The narrative description of the proposed project must not exceed 10 pages (not including curriculum vitae and supplemental documentation) and must be typed in 10-point font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. Each project or component listed in the budget justification must be completely and accurately described in the project description. The narrative should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and should: include specific objectives and performance measures for the period of the proposed work and the expected significance, demonstrate the applicant's knowledge of the need for the project, and show how the proposed project builds upon any past and current work in the subject area both inside and outside of the applicant organization, and any relevant work in related fields. Applicants should not assume that reviewers already know the relative merits of the project. Page limits for sections within the Project Description are given below to indicate relative importance of sections; not all sections should be the maximum length, in order to fit within the 10-page limit. The narrative project description must include each of the following elements in

the order listed here:

- a. *Project goals and objectives.* Identify the Prescott Grant Program Category and/or regional funding priorities, listed in Section I.B. of this document, that the project is addressing. State expected project accomplishments and its significance to the marine mammal health and stranding response and rehabilitation community. Objectives should be attainable within the time, money and human resources available, simple, understandable, and as specific and quantitative as possible. Although actual stranding events cannot be predicted, historic stranding data in the region of proposed activities should be used to assess season, species, and likelihood of future strandings. This data is critical in linking proposed project objectives with the Prescott Program's goals, regional funding priorities, and in assuring an equitable distribution of funds among regions. Therefore, we encourage applicants to provide stranding data and statistics by year and geographic area in sufficient detail to provide a regional context to the project.
- b. *Project management.* Describe how the proposed project will be organized and managed (e.g., financial accounting systems to be used and point of contact responsible for managing those systems, etc.). One, and only one, Principal Investigator must be designated on each project. Other project participants or organizations that will have a significant role in conducting the project should be listed as Co-investigators. Organizations or individuals that support the project, for example, network members contributing data or materials, should be referred to as Cooperators. If any portion of the project will be conducted through subcontracts, procurement guidance found in 15 CFR part 24, "Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments," and 15 CFR part 14, "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, and Commercial Organizations" must be followed. Describe how provisions for competitive subcontracting will be met if applicable. If the contractor has been identified, please provide a statement of their qualifications or background.
- c. *Project description.* This is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished to ensure that the proposed project's goals and objectives are met within the proposed award period. The statement of work should include detailed descriptions of activities, collaborators, milestones, and expected products resulting from a successfully completed project. The narrative should respond to the following questions:
  - (1) *What specific activities does the project include and how do these activities relate to the project's goals and objectives?*
  - (2) *Who will be responsible for carrying out each activity?* For all projects, highlight activities that will be conducted by Co-investigators, Cooperators, sub-contractors, volunteers, etc. Use of volunteer staff time to complete project activities and oversight of those volunteers should be discussed. The Principal Investigator is responsible for all technical oversight and implementation of the approved work plan as delineated in this Statement of Work.
  - (3) *What are the project milestones?* List milestones, describing specific activities and the associated timelines necessary to meet them. Describe the time lines in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2, etc.), rather than by specific dates. If dates are necessary (i.e. pupping

season), explain them. Make sure your timelines are reasonable and reflect your overall project period, as proposed on the SF424.

(4) *What are the major outcomes, results, or products expected?* Describe expected outcomes, results, or products, and how they directly relate to the Prescott Program goals (i.e., under your chosen Category A, B or C, and Regional funding priorities).

(5) *How will outcomes, results, or products be disseminated or shared?* Describe how project outcomes, results or products will be disseminated to or shared with stranding network participants and other potential users. In addition, describe how activities and results of the project will be shared outside the stranding network for education and outreach purposes. Indicate the method of information dissemination (e.g., print media, video, training manual, educational displays, peer-reviewed publication, etc.).

- d. Project impacts. Describe the potential impacts of this proposed project on the recovery and treatment of stranded marine mammals or the collection of data from living or dead stranded marine mammals for use in scientific research on marine mammal health. Identify any other potential project impacts, including impacts on the environment.
- e. Project performance evaluation. Specify the quantitative and/or qualitative criteria to be used in evaluating the relative success or failure of the project in achieving the stated project goals and objectives and project milestones.
- f. Need for federal assistance. Explain the need for government financial assistance in successfully carrying out project activities. List **all** sources of funding received from the Federal government, either past or current, for this or a closely related project(s), with project titles and Federal funding amounts. List other sources of Federal funding being sought for this same project.
- g. Federal, state, and local government programs and activities. List any existing Federal, state, or local government programs or activities that this project would affect and reference any corresponding documentation (i.e., permits, approvals, and environmental assessments) included in the proposal package.
- h. Participation by persons or groups other than the applicant. Describe how government and non-government entities, particularly other members of the marine mammal health and stranding response community, will participate in the project and the nature of their participation.

6. Organizational Summary (3 page limit): In three pages or less, provide a summary of your facility and the role you play in the marine mammal stranding network. Items that would be useful include: a map of your response area, response statistics (number of strandings/year in either table or chart form), organizational overview (number of paid staff, volunteers, researchers, etc.), size and capacity of your facility, a financial overview of your facility including what funds are available for the proposed work, and a summary of your relationship with neighboring stranding network responders.

7. Appendices (15 page limit): Additional material may be provided, but must not exceed 15 pages in length. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, slide shows, and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limitation.

8. Supporting Documentation (no page limit): The following supporting documentation is required for all proposals:

- proof of eligibility (see below);
- necessary permits and authorizations (if any);
- any applicable completed environmental analyses;
- results of previous Prescott awards;
- an abbreviated Curriculum Vitae for all named investigators (maximum 4 pages each);
- letters of cooperation from all named Co-Investigators and Cooperators;
- IRS documentation if applying as a 501(c)(3) non-profit;
- indirect cost rate agreement (if applicable); and
- any other required Federal forms (CD-346).

Further explanation of these types of supporting documentation follows.

In order to be considered for an award in this funding cycle, the applicant must provide proof of eligibility documents. This **proof of eligibility will be a letter or e-mail from the Regional Stranding Coordinator** (or NMFS Regional Office) that states that you are an eligible stranding network participant or researcher, in good standing, that has a history of participation in or with the stranding network or that your organization is from a local area with no pre-existing stranding response and/or rehabilitation capabilities. If you have this letter, you do not need to include a copy of your LOA, research authorization, etc. Contact information for the Regional Stranding Coordinators to request this letter is available on our website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/coordinators.htm> or you may contact the Program Office at the address in the Agency Contacts, Section VII.

Applicants requiring ESA/MMPA scientific research and enhancement permits must include a copy of the cover letter of their permit(s) in this section or their request for such permit.

If any PI or CI identified on the project has received support from the NOAA Prescott Grant Program in the past 3 years, information on the prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided: 1) the NOAA award number, amount and period of support; 2) the title of the project; 3) a brief summary of the results of the completed work (1-2 paragraphs); 4) publications resulting from the award, if any (reprints may be submitted and are requested for documentation if available); 5) a brief description of available data, samples, physical collections and other related research projects not described elsewhere; and 6) if the current application is for renewed or continuing support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work. Copies of progress or final reports from previous awards are not necessary.

An abbreviated curriculum vitae or resume of the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigators, and all other named collaborators (maximum 4 pages each) must be included in this section.

Copies of agreements between the Principal Investigator and other participants in the project, describing the specific activities each participant would perform, should be included in this section. Also, copies of any endorsements received from other marine mammal health and stranding response participants related to this project may be included here.

Applicants applying as 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations must include a letter from the Internal Revenue Service verifying non-profit classification under the Internal Revenue Code and tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Code.

If indirect costs are included, the package should include a copy of the current, approved, negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal government (see Section IV.D.2).

All other required federal forms (i.e., CD-511, SF-LLL, CD-346) must be included in this section of a paper application.

Supporting documents named in this subsection will not count as a part of the 10 page limit for the project description or the 15 page limit for appendices.

#### C. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received in either electronic or hard copy form by the program office no later than 11:59 PM, EDT, on Wednesday, September 27, 2006. Proposals received after that date and time will not be considered for funding.

#### D. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates: Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which the Department of Commerce will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award, or the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the indirect cost rate approved by an oversight or cognizant Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date. However, the Federal share of the indirect costs may not exceed 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs for this Program. Applicants with indirect costs above 25 percent may use the amount above the 25 percent level as cost sharing. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

2. Allowable Costs: Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; and A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments." Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

#### E. Other Submission Requirements

All applications should be submitted via the Grants.Gov Find and Apply website. Should you encounter a problem with submitting your application online, you may submit a paper proposal package (one signed original and two copies) to: NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, Attn: Michelle Ordonez, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13620, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283, phone 301-713-2322 ext 177.

## **V. Application Review Information**

### **A. Evaluation Criteria**

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals: This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, this encompasses the following: Proposals will be evaluated on clear identification of project goals and objectives and the ability to link those goals and objectives to project activities and the applicability of the project's goals and objectives to the Prescott Program goals and regional funding priorities. Reviewers should consider: the likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results in the time line specified in the statement of work; the contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to the marine mammal stranding and rehabilitation communities; and, the amount of collaboration with other stranding network participants. (Score = 1-100; Weight = 40 percent)
2. Technical/scientific merit: This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, this encompasses the following: Proposals will be scored based on their clear identification of goals and objectives, performance evaluation methods, and the suitability of those methods for evaluating the success or failure of the project in terms of meeting its original goals and objectives. Proposals will also be evaluated on the sufficiency of information to evaluate the project technically, and, if such information is sufficient, the strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to securing productive and meaningful results. (Score = 1-100; Weight = 30 percent)
3. Overall qualifications of applicants: This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, this encompasses the following: The management of the project will be evaluated based on documentation of previous related experience and qualifications of the project's Principal Investigator, Co-investigator(s) and other personnel, including designated contractors, consultants, and Cooperators. Consideration will be made to previous awards received by the Principal Investigator and outcomes, results, or products resulting from such awards. (Score = 1-100; Weight = 10 percent)
4. Project costs: The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For this competition, this encompasses the following: The proposed costs and overall budget of the project will be evaluated in terms of the work proposed. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified, clear to the reviewer, and allocated appropriately. (Score = 1-100; Weight = 10 percent)
5. Outreach and education: NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural



resources. For this competition, this encompasses the following: The proposal will be evaluated for how project outcomes, results or products will be disseminated to or shared with stranding network participants, other potential users, and outside of the stranding network. This can encompass traditional education and outreach efforts (e.g. print media, curriculum development, videos, or websites) or sharing information within the scientific community (e.g. training manuals or videos, facility sharing, and publications in peer-reviewed journals). (Score = 1-100, Weight = 10 percent)

## B. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in 4 steps, described in detail in this section: initial screening, peer review, merit review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (the Director, NMFS Office of Protected Resources). The peer review step will involve at least 3 individual reviewers per proposal. The Selecting Official will make the final decision regarding which proposals will be funded based on recommendations of the merit review team as well as policy considerations such as costs, geographical distribution, financial need, duplication with other federally funded projects, and equitable distribution of funds among the stranding regions.

### 1. Initial Technical Evaluation of the Applicants

The initial screening will ensure that proposals clearly relate to the 2007 Prescott Program goals or regional funding priorities, and that applicants meet all of the eligibility criteria.

Proposal packages received in the Office of Protected Resources will be screened to ensure that they: were received by the due date (see IV.C, Submission Dates and Times); provide for at least a 25-percent non-Federal cost share (see Section III.B. ); and provide proof of eligibility (see Section III.F. and Section IV.B.6). Proposals that pass this initial screening will be pooled based on the proposal category (i.e., Category A, B, or C) identified by the applicant.

### 2. Peer Review

Each accepted proposal will undergo a peer review by participants in the U.S. marine mammal stranding network or other qualified persons (scientists, researchers, biologists, stranding network participants from foreign countries, engineers, etc.) based on the subject matter of the proposals received. Peer reviewers will be asked to evaluate individual proposals based on the Prescott Program goal or regional funding priorities identified by the applicant and the review criteria (Section V.A). Review groups will be created, and each group of proposals will be reviewed by an appropriate peer-review panel. Reviewers assigned to score each proposal will be from a different region than the applicant to avoid any potential conflicts of interest, but there may be panel members present for the discussion that are from the same regional stranding network. Each peer reviewer will be required to certify that they do not have a conflict of interest concerning the proposal(s) they are reviewing prior to their review. Each panelist will also be required to identify any potential conflicts of interest with proposals being reviewed on their panel and to leave the room when these proposals are being discussed, even though they may not be scoring them. Ranking and commenting on proposals will be completed

during the peer-review meetings. The results from the peer review will be used to numerically rank the proposals and provide programmatic and regional stakeholder comments on each proposal.

To determine the appropriateness of each proposal to the Prescott Program's goals and/or regional funding priorities, the peer reviewers will provide independent reviews using the weighted criteria outlined above. Each proposal will be reviewed by at least 3 peer reviewers. The reviewers will score the proposal in each criteria outlined in Section A above. An average, weighted score will be generated from each review using the numeric score per criteria and the weights assigned to each criteria. All proposals with an average weighted score less than 60 points will not be passed on to the merit review panel and will not be reviewed further.

### 3. Merit Review

After proposals have undergone peer review, the national and regional MMHSRP staff will conduct a merit review in consultation with the Marine Mammal Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to consider the technical and peer review results and develop recommendations for funding. Merit reviewers will use the peer review comments, application materials, stranding statistics by region (i.e., geographic need for proposed projects), and number of applications received in making recommendations regarding equitable distribution of funds among regions, in ranking all proposals recommended for funding, and in justifying any discrepancies between the peer reviewers' comments and the merit reviewers' recommendations. Equitable distribution will be determined by the review of all technically sound proposals (those that score above 60 points in the peer review) pooled by stranding region. The merit review will consider proposals by region using the best available data on episodic, anomalous or unusual stranding events, average annual strandings and mortalities, and sizes of marine mammal populations within each region. They will also consider the actual stranding statistics per region, stranding network effort or coverage per region, and the applicant's history with past funding from the Prescott program. The merit review team will prepare a written justification for any recommendations for funding that fall outside the peer review ranking or equitable distribution order, or for any cost adjustments.

4. Final Selection: After applications have undergone peer and merit reviews and been ranked, the merit review team and the Program Office will prepare recommendations for funding to the Selecting Official (the Director, NMFS Office of Protected Resources).

### C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. A program officer may first make recommendations to the Selecting Official applying the selection factors below. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:

- a. Geographically
  - b. By type of institutions
  - c. By type of partners
  - d. By research areas
  - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in sections I.A. and B. above.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups.
- As a result, awards are not necessarily made to the highest technically ranked projects.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the two months following the date given in this announcement that the full proposals are due to the Prescott Grant Program. Funding should begin during summer 2007 for most approved projects. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to June 1, 2007, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

The final, exact amount of funds, the scope of work, and terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA/NMFS representatives. If the proposed work entails substantial involvement between the applicant and NMFS, such as development of education and outreach materials for the public, training for the stranding network, or facility upgrades, a cooperative agreement will be utilized. The final determination of the funding instrument (grant or cooperative agreement) will be by NOAA Grants Management Division.

Applicants should not initiate any project in expectation of Federal funding until they receive a grant award document signed by an authorized NOAA Grants Officer. After all awards have been issued by the Grants Management Division to successful applicants, the unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for funding, and be provided the comments from the review panel(s). Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of at least 12 months, then destroyed.

### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

#### The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and

Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), are applicable to this solicitation.

### Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

### National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

OAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA ([http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216\\_6\\_TOC.pdf](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf)), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations ([http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc\\_ceq.htm](http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm)). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, including marine mammals, aquaculture projects, water sterilization and treatment, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

### C. Obligations of Recipients

Applicants awarded a grant or cooperative agreement for a project must:

1. Manage the day-to-day operations of the project, be responsible for the performance of all activities for which funds are granted, and be responsible for the satisfaction of all administrative and managerial conditions imposed by the award.
2. Keep records sufficient to document any costs incurred under the award, and allow access

to these records for audit and examination by the Secretary of Commerce, the Comptroller General of the United States, or their authorized representatives; and, submit financial status reports (SF 269) to NOAA's Grants Management Division in accordance with the award conditions.

3. Submit financial and performance (technical) reports on time. All financial reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer. Performance reports should be submitted to the Prescott Program Office every six months, beginning from the project start date indicated on the SF-424. We are committed to using available technology to achieve the timely and wide distribution of final reports to those who would benefit from this information. Therefore, we request submission of final reports in electronic format, in accordance with the award terms and conditions, for publication on the NMFS Protected Resources Home Page. Awardees can charge the costs associated with preparing and transmitting your final reports in electronic format to the grant award. We will consider requests for exemption from electronic submission of final reports on a case-by-case basis. The comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration. The final report must describe the project and include an evaluation of the work performed and the results and benefits in sufficient detail to enable us to assess the success of the completed project. In addition to the final report, we request that awardees submit any publications printed with award funds (such as manuals, surveys, etc.) to the NMFS Program Officer for dissemination to the public. Publications may be submitted either as three hard copies or in an electronic version.

## **VII. Agency Contact(s)**

Please visit the Prescott Grant Program website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/> or contact Michelle Ordonez at the NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13620, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283, by phone at (301) 713-2322, or by fax at (301) 427-2525, or by e-mail at [PrescottGrantFR.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:PrescottGrantFR.comments@noaa.gov).